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Message Text

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60
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /054 W
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R 061640Z NOV 74
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6149
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 1585

LONDON POUCH BELFAST

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT,EI, UK, (NI)
SUBJECT: DUBLIN'S NI POLICY HARDENING

SUMMARY: GOI NOW REJECTS IDEA OF PROLONGED DIRECT RULE IN NI, PROBABLY FEARING THAT BRITISH WILL USE IT AS EXCUSE FOR WITHDRAWAL. BUT DUBLIN DOES NOT SEEM ABLE TO ARTICULATE ANY CONVINCING ALTERNATIVE. RUMORS OF CABINET SPLIT OVER NI ARE CONFIRMED. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAD CONVERSATION NOVEMBER 4 WITH SEAN DONLON, FONOFF ASST SEC FOR NI AFFAIRS, WHOM WE HAD NOT SEEN FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. SOME OF HIS COMMENTS WERE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS AND PONTED TOWARD A TOUGHER DUBLIN POSITION ON NI PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH OUR CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE IMMEDIATELY AFTER PM COSGRAVE'S MEETING WITH PM WILSON, IT DID NOT AMOUNT TO FULL-SCALE BRIEFING, AND SOURCE WAS UNUSUALLY CAUTIOUS IN REPLYING TO OUR QUESTIONS ON "SUMMIT." EMBASSY LONDON MAY GET MORE BALANCED PICTURE.

2. SOURCE SAID THAT A PROLONGED PERIOD OF DIRECT RULE IN NI WOULD BE "DANGEROUS." (UNTIL NOW, GOI HAS APPEARED TO LOOK ON DIRECT RULE FROM WESTMINSTER AS ONLY FEASIBLE RESPONSE TO LOYAL-
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IST INTRANSIGENCE, THOUGH CLEARLY NOT AN OPTIMUM POLICY.) WE

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ASKED WHAT ALTERNATIVE EXISTS, SINCE ALMOST EVERYONE BELIEVES THAT NI CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION WILL PRODUCE DEADLOCK. SOURCE REPLIED THAT BRITISH HAD RESPONSIBILITY TO PUT PRESSURE ON LOYALISTS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF A LASTING SOLUTION. IN REPLY TO ANOTHER QUESTION, HE CONFIRMED THAT PM WILSON HAD ACCEPTED NEED OF POWER-SHARING. WE THEN ASKED WHAT MECHANISM BRITISH COULD USE TO PRESS LOYALISTS INTO CHANGING THEIR MIND. SOURCE REPLIED THAT BRITISH WOULD HAVE TO MAKE MUCH MORE CLEAR TO LOYALISTS THAT THEY COULD NOT AFFORD TO MAINTAIN THEIR INTRANSIGECNCE. HE REFERRED TO BRITISH SUBSIDIES THAT PROP UP NI ECONOMY.

3. WE ASKED WHETHER SOURCE HAD ANY HOPE THAT BRITISH PRESSURE WOULD MAKE LOYALISTS BACK DOWN. (VIRTUALLY EVERY JOURNALIST HAS REPORTED THAT THREATS ARE INEFFECTIVE). SOURCE REPLIED THAT THE JOB WAS, OF COURSE, VERY DIFFICULT, AND THAT BRITISH PRESSURE MIGHT NOT WORK IN SHORT TERM. BUT HE RETURNED TO THEME OF BRITISH RESPONSIBILITY, INSISTING THAT LONDON WOULD HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO FULFILL ITS OBLIGATIONS.

4. SOURCE ALSO GAVE WHAT AMOUNTS TO CONFIRMATION THAT THERE IS STRAIN WITHIN GOI OVER NI POLICY. HE CRITICIZED MINISTER CRUISE-O'BRIEN'S NI POSITION AND SUGGESTED THAT FONMIN FITZGERALD WAS AT ODDS WITH HIS COLLEAGUE. O'BRIEN, SAID SOURCE, THOUGHT THAT WHOLE IRISH POBLEM WAS RESULT OF FACT THAT THERE WERE TWO COMMUNITIES (PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC) ON ISLAND, AND THAT WHOLE PROBLEM WAS ONE OF RECONCILING TWO COMMUNITIES. FITZGERALD BELIEVED THAT PRESENCE OF AN UNNATURAL BOUNDARY BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH WAS PERHAPS EVEN MORE BASIC PROBLEM, SINCE IT HAD FORCED OPPOSING COMMUNITIES INTO POSITIONS THAT WERE EXCESSIVELY RIGID AND SECTARIAN.

5. COMMENT: IRISH POSITION ON BRITISH RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS NORTH IS SLIGHTLY PUZZLING AND MAY INDICATE THAT GOI POLICY IS IN PROCESS OF TRANSITION. MISSING ELEMENT IN SOURCE'S EXPLANATION WAS MECHANISM THROUGH WHICH BRITISH MIGHT BRING LOYALISTS TO ACCEPT CATHOLICS AS PARTNERS IN GOVERNMENT. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT GAP, AND UNTIL IT IS SETTLED, GOI POLICY DOES NOT SOUND VERY PERSUASIVE. FONMIN FITZGERALD ALSO FAILED TO FILL THIS GAP IN HIS ANNUAL FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH NOV. 5. FOR NOW, WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK THAT IRISH ARE TERRIFIED BY PROSPECT OF BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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NI AFTER A PERIOD OF INCONCLUSIVE DIRECT RULE. THEY MAY, IN FACT, BELIEVE THAT "DIRECT RULE" HAS BECOME A BRITISH EUPHEMISM FOR GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL. MAJOR BRITISH NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT THIS FEAR AND MAY CONTRIBUTE TO NOTE OF PANIC HERE.

6. AS SOURCE EXPLAINED IT, CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FITZGERALD AND CRUISE-O'BRIEN APPROACH IS NOT ENORMOUS, BUT IT COULD NEVERTHELESS ACCOUNT FOR MANY OF RUMORED CABINET ARGUMENTS

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WHICH HAVE BEEN REPORTED OVER PAST MONTHS.
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